

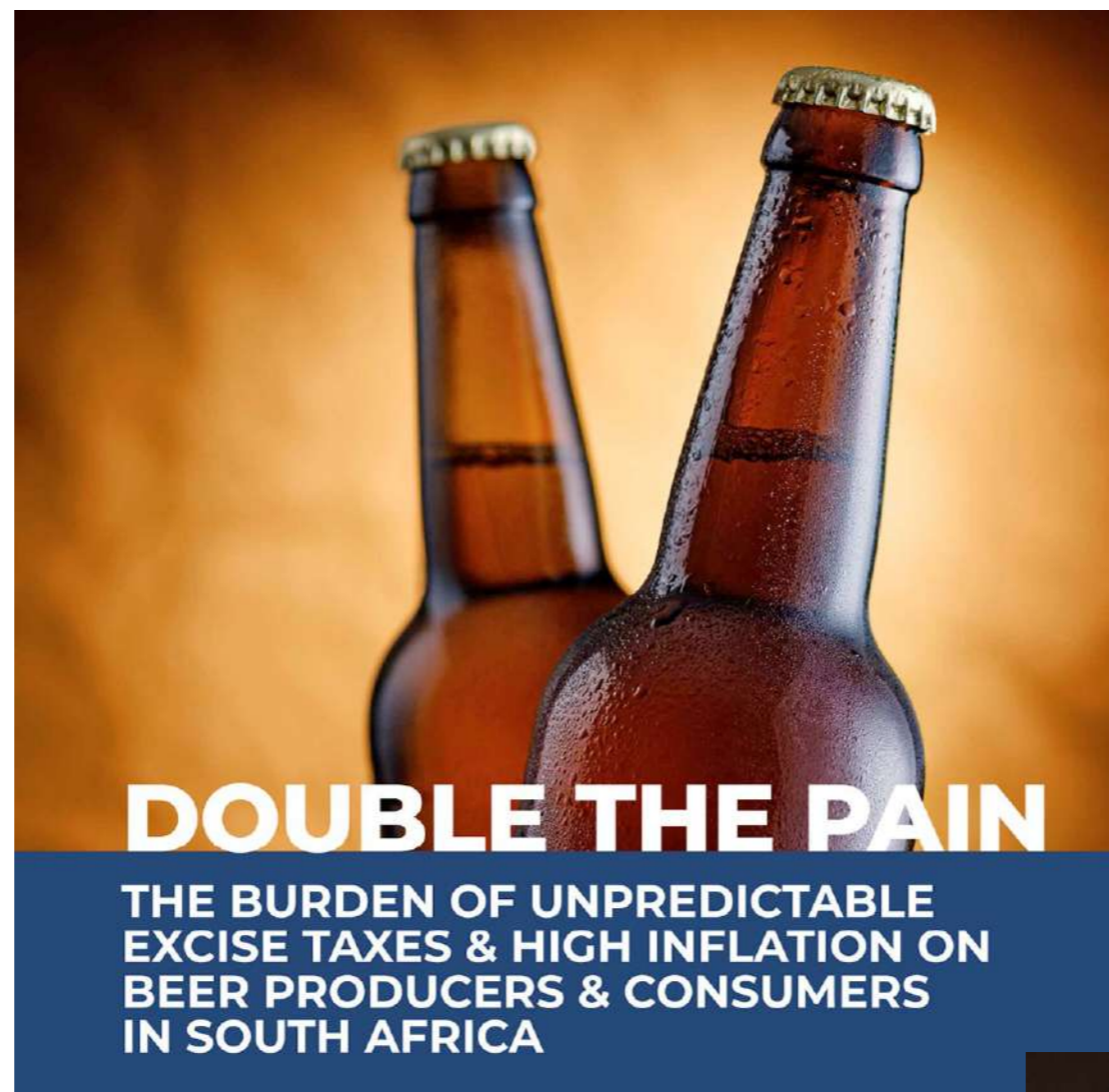
A new report by Oxford Economics Africa titled *Double the Pain: The burden of unpredictable excise taxes and high inflation on beer in South Africa*, has found that above-inflation adjustments to excise duties, that are not in line with current excise policy have pushed beer tax burdens above excise policy targets.

The current government excise tax target is 23%. However, the actual excise tax burden is 25%. This means that for every beer bought, 25% of the final price is excise taxes paid into the fiscus.

In a tough, low-growth macroeconomic environment, both consumers and producers must navigate 'Double the Pain'. Like many other businesses in South Africa, SAB has been navigating a tough trading environment over the last year, which has been underscored by high inflation, high interest rates, and above-inflation increases in electricity and water supply.

The report was presented during the Beer Tax Indaba, which examined the burden of unpredictable excise taxes in a historically high inflation environment in South Africa. The report also found that the government disproportionately relies on the beer industry for excise revenues, representing 34.7% of total excise revenues in 2023/24 – making beer the largest of all excisable products.

Commenting on the report's findings, Richard Rivett-Carnac, CEO of SAB, noted that "We need, as an industry, strong policy certainty around



job creation and economic growth. At the end of the day, this has a negative impact on an industry that is inherently local and inclusive, supporting nearly 250 000 livelihoods."

The report also compared South Africa's approach to excise duties on beer to regimes in Australia, Canada, Mauritius, Tanzania and the United Kingdom. The exercise showed that the benchmark countries have kept their excise duties on beer in line with or below inflation, while beer duties in South Africa have been unpredictable & consistently exceeded inflation.

To this Deon Fourie, Lead Economist at Oxford Economics Africa, argued that ...

“ Beer duties have been unpredictable & consistently exceeded inflation. ”

Oxford Economics Africa



Richard Rivett-Carnac

excise tax. We understand that the government is under pressure from a budgetary perspective. For ten years we have seen inflated excise tax increases when compared with inflation. That is contrary to the policy and really impacts the industry – an industry that is very important for the country,



Deon Fourie

“ Reliable & predictable changes in duties, avert real duty erosion, create policy certainty, promote trust, aid consumer and firm budgeting and minimise market disruptions. One way to achieve such is to allow for an automated CPI-indexed mechanism on the excise duty. ”

Speaking after a Q&A discussion, Keith Engel, CEO of the SA Institute of Taxation (SAIT), highlighted that "tax authorities need to find a delicate balance between generating revenue through beer excise taxes and mitigating economic impacts

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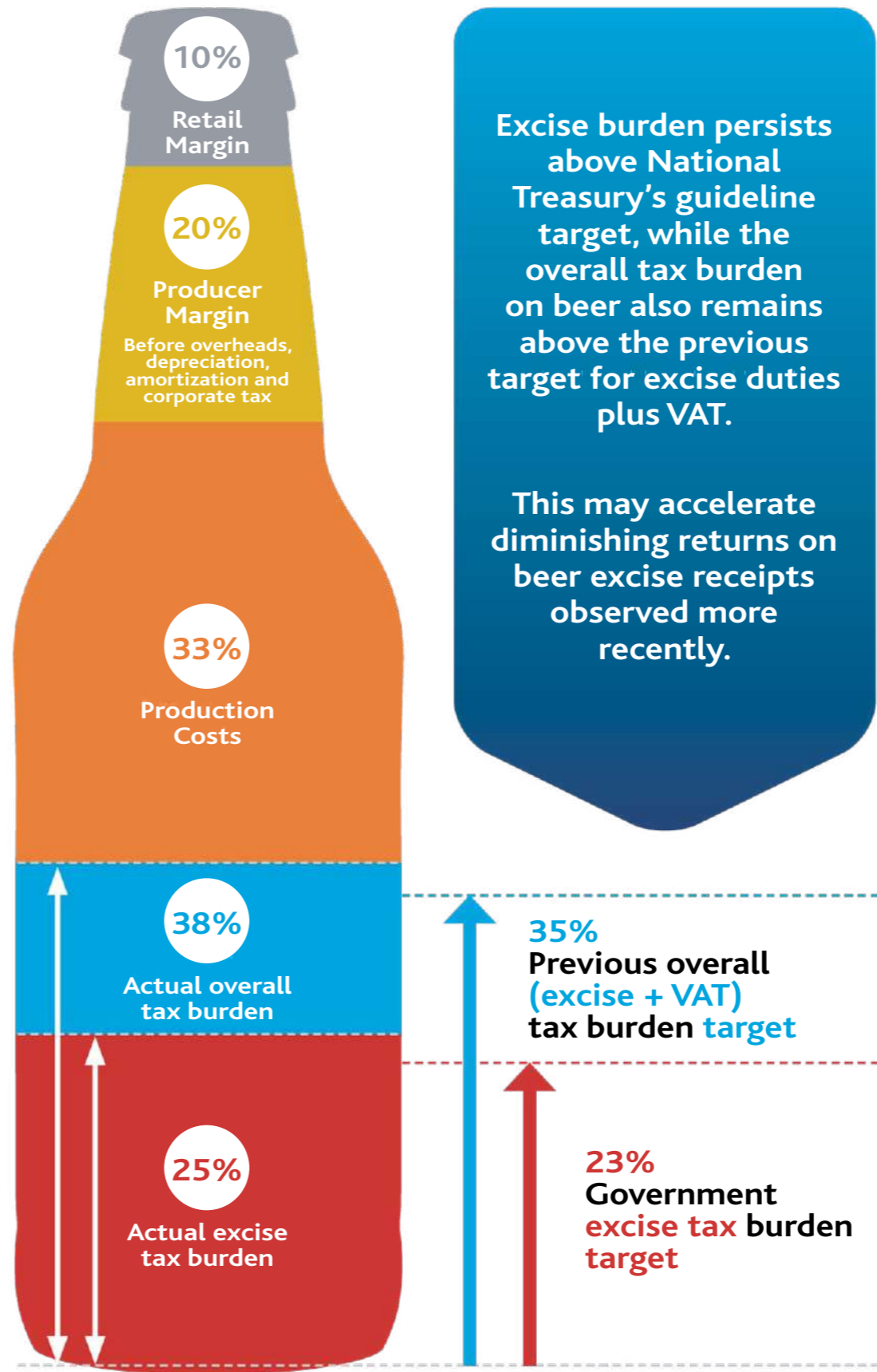




Keith Engel

on the brewing industry. The unpredictability of excise tax increases threatens the principle of fair taxation. A more predictable, perhaps even multi-year excise tax plan could foster greater tax certainty, providing the beer industry with the stability in the tax environment

As a % of weighted average retail prices of beer



Excise burden persists above National Treasury's guideline target, while the overall tax burden on beer also remains above the previous target for excise duties plus VAT.

This may accelerate diminishing returns on beer excise receipts observed more recently.

**Note:** South Africa's tax burdens on beer were calculated using retail prices for beer supplied by SAB which also provided the remaining cost composition in the final beer price.

that it needs to business plan confidently."

The Oxford Economics Africa report highlights that the Government should strive to limit deviations from the excise burden target going forward, as per the National Treasury's guidelines.

The government should automatically index excise duties on beer to actual CPI outcomes as opposed to projected inflation or anticipated retail prices for beer. The result will be a more stable tax environment that allows the beer sector to grow responsibly and to continue to support the South African economy and jobs. **SR**



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# Salut! The local beverage industry raises a glass ... and the bar

The South African beverage industry is in an intriguing place. Significant investment from both local and international sources and numbers that point definitively towards growth by a new breed of consumer: sober-curious, health-conscious, and moderate drinkers are a growing force. Tapping into this new consumer behaviour, the beverage industry has responded with increased product development, novel offerings, and an innovative approach to capturing new markets.

## Thirsty for more: the SA beverages industry is growing

Local retailers and wholesalers should take note; the South African beverages industry is in a growth phase. With this comes some significantly changed consumer behaviour and an exciting new avenue for producers to pursue.

Agile, forward-thinking retailers must stay abreast of the sentiments expressed on social media by younger consumers – keeping their finger on the pulse of popular opinion, innovations, and fast-moving trends.

In his article *SA's beverage industry shows a thirst for growth and innovation* (bizcommunity.com), Brendan Grundlingh, Rand Merchant Bank (RMB) Sector Head: CPG\* and Beverages, writes ...



Image by Roberto Caucino, www.canva.com

**Agile, forward-thinking retailers must stay abreast of the sentiments expressed on social media by younger consumers – keeping their finger on the pulse of popular opinion, innovations, and fast-moving trends.**



Brendan Grundlingh

“This sector is not just a major contributor to the country’s GDP; it is a cornerstone of economic growth, fuelled by evolving consumer habits, urbanisation, and a rising population. 🇿🇦”

“The industry’s impressive performance has drawn attention from both domestic and international investors, positioning it as a key player in the nation’s economy and paving the way for further consolidation in the future.”

According to Grundlingh, the beverage industry has outpaced the broader consumer packaged goods sector in recent years. He continues ...

\*Consumer Packaged Goods



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“ The industry’s contribution to GDP is evident through direct manufacturing, job creation, and the robust distribution networks that sustain both the formal and informal markets. As consumer spending patterns shift and urbanisation continues, the beverage sector demonstrates significant potential for growth. ”

One of the biggest indicators of this local potential is recent investments by global giants, notably Heineken’s R13.6bn direct investment and their acquisition of Distell, and Varun Beverages Limited (VBL)’s R3bn acquisition of BevCo, the Pepsi bottler in South Africa. For Grundlingh, steady growth has also been driven by competition between AB InBev (SAB) and Heineken, as well as the rise of challenger brands such as Devil’s Peak, which are diversifying available options.

## Trends driving growth

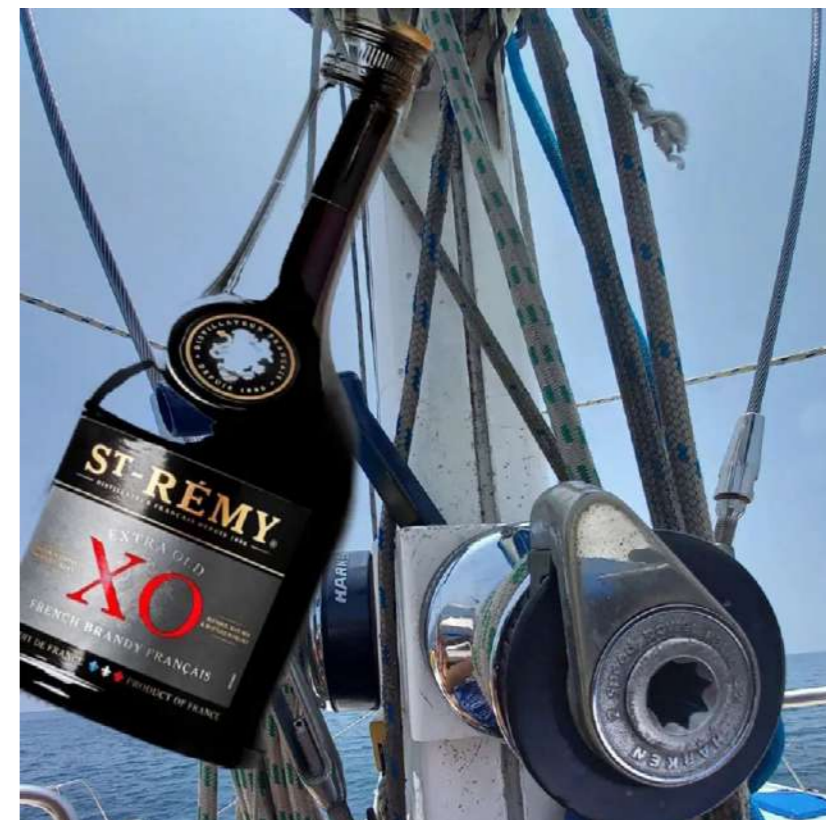
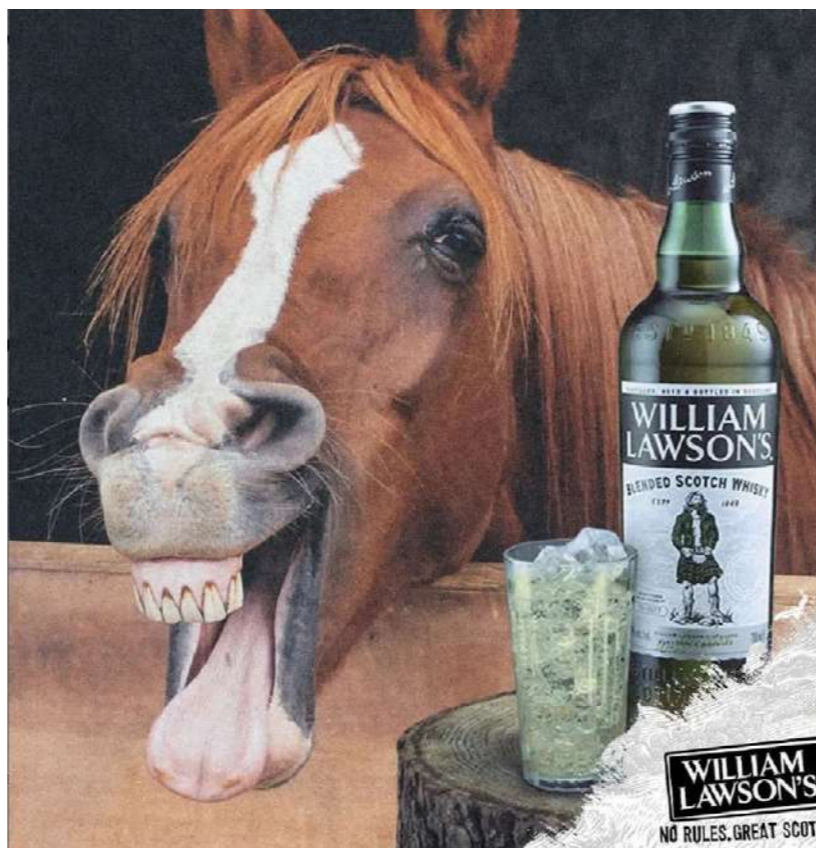
Grundlingh explains that the growth can be attributed to three trends. He says, “The growth is across a select set of categories, as innovation and brand development drive interest in products. These products are primarily utilising three key themes that are driving growth.”

## Premiumisation

Premiumisation has been impacting the local market for several years now, as social cachet (prestige) and personal taste encourage consumers to seek out top quality products at prices to match.



Talisker 30-Year-Old whisky from Diageo is a limited bottling, featuring a gentle peppery kick with wisps of sea smoke. From the distillery on the Isle of Skye, it maintains the excellence that whisky aficionados have come to anticipate.



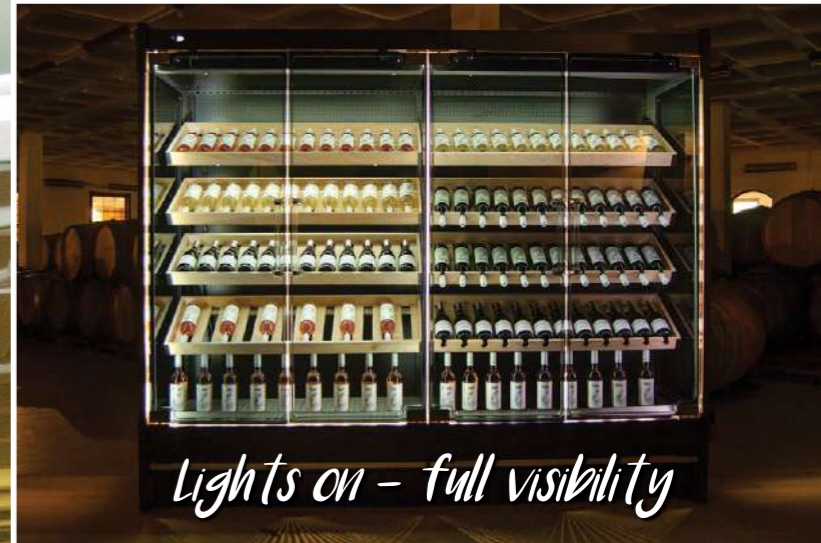
Elevate your spirit with St Remy XO from Bevco, a multi-award-winning brandy of distinct character, with elaborate aromas and a rich taste. Elegant and smooth.

For some, it’s an actual appreciation of the time and expertise that goes into the product, for others it’s all about being seen to enjoy ‘the best’.

Grundlingh notes that this is particularly true for global spirits companies such as Pernod Ricard and Diageo, which are refocusing on their global premium portfolio and driving interest through sought-after high-end ranges. He says, “Pernod Ricard recently sold its Red Heart Rum brand to KWV as the global wine and spirits group focuses on its 17 global brands. Diageo is injecting new energy into the gin category after regaining full ownership of the Gordon’s brand, while Pernod Ricard is promoting its global gin brand Beefeater alongside local brand Inverroche, which continues to lead in the Cape botanicals gin segment.”



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**Affordability**

Affordability is a refrain that local retailers and wholesalers are painfully aware of. Local consumers are under increasing financial strain and affordability is becoming a more important purchase driver than ever before.

Grundlingh says, "This is where local innovators and distributors of regional brands come in. They are driving products that meet the needs of the clients in this affordable category, often targeting price points, but also making sure the brand has some sort of perceived premium aspect. This means session-able (affordable enough to have more than one beverage per occasion), and potentially lower alcohol. This is where RTDs, cider and spritzer growth has started to accelerate beyond the beer category."

As Grundlingh points out, big-brand international players are aggressively targeting this space, but South Africa boasts innovative smaller producers including Chateau Del Rei, House of BNG, Brooks, Cape Spritz, and Kix Spritzer. Local consumers are spoilt for choice.



But it's not all about price, says international data and insight consultancy and consumer intelligence company CGA by NIQ. In an article for Bizcommunity titled *South African consumers prioritise value over price in beverage selection,*

Abhi Sehgal



The House of BNG celebrates the fabulous, the stylish and, most of all, those who create iconic moments in fashion history!

Abhi Sehgal, CGA by NIQ Client Solutions manager, says ...

“ A remarkable 51% of South African consumers now prioritise value over price in their drink selections, significantly outpacing the global average of 38%. This shift underscores a growing demand for products that strike the perfect balance between affordability and quality, pushing suppliers and venues to deliver more than just low-cost options. ”

As inflation continues to impact spending, the emphasis on true value has become more



For the House of BNG, the smallest accessory can create the most memorable impression.

critical than ever in the on-premise sector, signalling a clear preference for quality that is worth every rand spent.”

**Availability**

Availability is the most critical for new and innovative brands. If you can't get your product to the end consumer, you can't grow. For Grundlingh, this is where RMB is seeing consolidation in the distributor universe, with players like KWV, Truman & Orange, Edward Snell and others all taking on more principal and agency brands to merchandise and distribute into the market. Grundlingh adds, "Retailers and wholesalers are seeing an abundance of new products; however, it is impossible to stock them all. Which makes it important for the retail and wholesale channel to work closely with their distributor partners to understand which products to stock and promote. Particularly as it relates to the above three key trends."

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## Innovation and product development, investment into local canning and bottling

Grundlingh expects to see another leap in product development and new offerings as the industry pivots to meet demand, and he feels this will prove yet another boon for the economy and retailers and wholesalers too.

“We believe the local market will start to provide some innovative products that will likely be consolidated into larger beverage platforms. We expect further investment to go into local canning and bottling, which will enhance the local operations ability to reduce costs and be more active in the on-premise and off-premise market.

“Overall, given the primary and secondary contribution that total beverages contribute to the South African economy (through labour, manufacturing, production, canning, bottling, distribution and merchandising), we are excited to see how our local players drive future growth.”

## Alcoholic beverages are here to stay

Major South African players such as SAB may be pushing moderation, and with good reason, but the country’s favourite tipples aren’t going anywhere. According to the South African Department of Trade Industry and Competition (DTIC), South Africa has a relatively low percentage of the population that consumes alcohol, however those who do, consume it at relatively higher amounts than the international average.



SAB’s Corona beer is inherently linked to lime – a wedge of the citrus is traditionally served as part of the drinking ritual. Yet, as the beer became popular in the country, it encountered a severe shortage of limes.

While limes are grown in South Africa, other citrus fruits are far more profitable. Of the over 90 000 hectares of citrus orchards in the country, less than 10% of the land is dedicated to limes. As a result, consumers either end up paying for expensive imported limes or they substitute them with lemons, which present a vastly different flavour profile.

The solution was a partnership between SAB, the Moletele Communal Property Association (Moletele Community) and Komati Fruit Group, in an exemplary Community Private Partnership (CPP), to establish and run a farming operation that would ensure reliable local production of limes. <https://www.sab.co.za/>

## Beyond hop and vine: alcohol-free and de-alcoholised

Alcohol-free (no alcohol) and de-alcoholised (reduced alcohol content) options are good options to stock on your shelves. Local retailers have adapted well to changing consumer behaviour, inspired, no doubt, by the restrictions and regulations of the past, yet spurred on by growing buyer enthusiasm. Checkers offers Van Loveren Almost Zero De-Alcoholised Sauvignon, Merlot, and Moscato, as well as the Leopard’s Leap Natura De-Alcoholised Classic Red and Classic White, and for those who prefer bubbles, J.C. Le Roux’s Vivante La Fleurette Non-Alcoholic Sparkling Rosé Wine.

Woolworths has also embraced the alcohol-free trend with the Lautus range of wines by winemaker Reg Holder, who also makes the exclusive De-Alc range only available at Woolworths. Woolworths also offers light or low alcohol wines and has a variety of alcohol-free coolers and mocktails available under their own label.

South African consumers are embracing moderation or even embarking on a sober-curious journey and many of South Africa’s most notable vineyards, including Robertson Winery, De Krans, Darling Cellars, and Spier are making alcohol-free or de-alcoholised wines to meet this growing demand. It’s a trend that is building throughout the industry,

from Ginologist London Dry Botanicals Alcohol Free Gin to Fruit Lagoon's fruity cocktail bases.

In fact it's almost impossible to find a major retailer who doesn't stock some form of alcohol-free adult beverage, from ready-to-drink mocktails and mixers to 0.0% beer or cider.



Zoleka Lisa

Zoleka Lisa, Vice President of Corporate Affairs at SAB, says ...

“The rise of non-alcoholic beer is more than just a trend; it's a testament to the evolving landscape of consumer preferences and a reflection of broader societal shifts. With the global surge in the sober-curious movement, people are re-evaluating their relationship with alcohol, leading to a pronounced shift towards no- or low-alcohol alternatives.”

## Global low- and no-alc sales

According to IWSR (<https://theiwsr.com>), a leading global drinks data and insight provider, global sales of no- and low-alcoholic beverages hit R197 billion (US\$11 billion) in 2022, with no-alcohol products making up 70% of this volume. Projections suggest



Ginologist ... handcrafted small batch gin using the finest exotic botanicals mixed to surprise and delight the most ardent gin fans!

## Safari Gin: celebrating & preserving wildlife conservation in South Africa

Ginologist believes that enjoying the beauty of South Africa's wildlife and landscapes comes with a responsibility to protect them. Designed to evoke the spirit of a sunset game drive, Safari Gin also aims to give back to the stunning environments it celebrates. As part of their mission, they've partnered with reputable organisations and projects dedicated to preserving South Africa's country's natural treasures, such as ...

The timeless UNESCO Waterberg Biosphere safeguards spaces, species, and people. Established in 2001, it is home to the world's second-largest rhino population, endangered pangolins and South Africa's last free wild dog pack. Additionally, it hosts protected plants, including cycads.

Ant Africa Safaris is deeply committed to sustainable tourism, placing the protection and conservation of wildlife at the forefront of their mission. Their reserve, integrated within the vast 300 000ha Waterberg Nature Conservancy, hosts over 40 species of game, including sable antelope, nyala, oryx, eland, giraffe, and white rhino, as well as more than 300 bird species.

that the market will grow by over a third by 2026.

Lisa says, "Several factors are fuelling this modern-day renaissance. A key driver is the growing health consciousness among consumers. With an increasing awareness of the adverse effects of excessive alcohol consumption, many are seeking healthier alternatives. This shift is particularly evident among millennials and Gen Z, who prioritise wellness and embrace mindful drinking. She notes that much like the wine and spirits industry, innovation in brewing technology has played a crucial role in uptake among consumers. Better tasting products that mirror the mouth feel of their alcoholic counterparts make for a more pleasant and inclusive experience.

SAB has taken a strong stance against binge

drinking and supports and actively promotes a moderate approach. Lisa says, "As societal attitudes shift away from binge drinking and its associated stigma, more people are choosing moderation. This shift not only benefits individuals but also supports a culture of responsibility and mindfulness."

She adds, "From a business perspective, the rise of alcohol-free beer is not just a trend, but a strategic imperative. The beer industry is a major contributor to economic growth, supporting millions of jobs and generating significant GDP. In South Africa alone, the beer sector supports nearly 250 000 jobs and added R71 billion to the country's GDP in 2019. This economic impact underscores the responsibility of the industry to innovate and adapt to changing consumer preferences."

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Notable alcohol-free beers and ciders include Heineken 0.0% Alcohol Free Lager Beer, Peroni Nastro Azzurro 0% Alcohol Free Beer, and Heineken 0.0% Alcohol Free Lager Beer ([www.tesco.com](http://www.tesco.com)). SAB has introduced Corona Cero, an alcohol-free beer infused with vitamin D, an example of their commitment to innovation and meeting consumer needs. For Lisa, the non-alcoholic beer market is poised for continued growth and diversification.

She says, "As breweries experiment with new flavours and techniques, consumers can expect an expanding array of high-quality, appealing non-alcoholic options. The competitive landscape will drive further improvements in taste and variety, ensuring that the industry remains dynamic and responsive to evolving preferences." The only way to move is forward, and for SAB, this means championing innovation and fostering a culture of responsible, inclusive enjoyment.

## Flavoured alcoholic beverages

The South African market accounts for nearly 95% of the African flavoured alcoholic beverages market, according to a report on [www.just-drinks.com](http://www.just-drinks.com). This position is supported by data from an article on [www.bizcommunity.com](http://www.bizcommunity.com), that says consumption of FABs in South Africa is 39%, far above the global average of 8%.

Manufacturers and suppliers in the South African market use innovation to target gaps in the market, however tracking the market and sales performance is essential in this fast-changing category ([www.just-drinks.com](http://www.just-drinks.com)).



The craziest kite surfing competition is back with a new qualifier in Tarifa, Spain. The winner gets a ticket to South Africa to participate in Red Bull King of the Air.

Premixed spirits and wine coolers have also seen growth in the South African market. In line with this trend, The Coca-Cola Co. and Bacardi will introduce a new co-branded RTD cocktail next year. The Bacardi Mixed with Coca-Cola cocktail will initially be released in Mexico and selected EU markets in 2025. This follows The Coca-Cola Co.'s co-branded partnerships with Brown Forman's Jack Daniel's and Coca-Cola in 2022 ([www.just-drinks.com](http://www.just-drinks.com)).

## Cold beverages reap rewards

Moderation and health. The rise of moderate drinking and the sober-curious movement is bolstered by a public that is more health-conscious and knowledgeable about nutrition than ever before. Fruity sparkling waters, protein-based drinks, vitamin-boosting health drinks, energy drinks, and plant-based options vie with traditional



Tapping into new consumer behaviour, the beverage industry has responded with increased product development, novel offerings and an innovative approach to capturing new markets. Social media is playing an ever-increasing role in promoting brands in enjoyable companionable settings.

sodas and their low-cal, sugar-free, alternatives. It's a varied and exciting landscape, and also one that is deeply competitive and evolving.

According to data from CGA by NIQ, "South Africans over-index against the rest of the world for their interest in health. Well over a third (38%) of them say health has increased in importance to them in the last 12 months, against the global average of 27%."

From kombucha to Pura sodas and fruit juices and the Switch Vita C range, consumers are looking for healthier options for themselves and their families. Functional drinks are proving that buyers want more bang for their buck and pure hydration is not always enough of a purchase driver.



Monster Energy ... skateboarding at Huber Fest in Cologne.

## Energy drinks on the rise

Grundlingh says, "While global brands like Red Bull and Monster Energy continue to dominate, local brands such as Switch, Score, Reboost, and Dragon are challenging the status quo by focusing on affordability, availability, and innovation in flavour."

He adds, "Energy drinks are currently the fastest-growing subsector within carbonated drinks, although this growth raises concerns about health and wellness." He adds, "In the broader non-alcoholic space, Coca-Cola Beverage Africa (CCBA) and PepsiCo, through VBL's BevCo, are introducing a range of sugar-free and low-calorie options to cater to health-conscious consumers."



## Top tip and key takeaways for cold and alcoholic beverages

One thing is clear for local retailers and wholesalers

– international trends will reach local shores, but South African consumers have a mind of their own and understanding their purchase drivers and changing buyer behaviour is vital for continued business success.

## Five key notes

- The South African beverages industry is in a growth phase
- Health trends are key in beverage choices
- Low- and no-alcohol beverages showing biggest global growth
- Brewers are promoting moderation
- Know what your market wants to avoid over-catering. **SR**

## Sources:

- [www.just-drinks.com/data-insights/flavoured-alcoholic-beverages-market-size-south-africa/](http://www.just-drinks.com/data-insights/flavoured-alcoholic-beverages-market-size-south-africa/)
- [www.just-drinks.com/news/jack-daniels-partner-coca-cola-to-launch-rtd-with-bacardi/](http://www.just-drinks.com/news/jack-daniels-partner-coca-cola-to-launch-rtd-with-bacardi/)
- [www.bizcommunity.com/article/63-of-south-africans-consider-bars-and-restaurants-a-must-have-340648a](http://www.bizcommunity.com/article/63-of-south-africans-consider-bars-and-restaurants-a-must-have-340648a)



**Ann Baker-Keulemans** writes on topics related to business, lifestyle, technology, and health, with extensive knowledge on the SA retail and wholesale landscape. Contact [annbk@wilkinsross.co.za](mailto:annbk@wilkinsross.co.za) | [www.wilkinsrossglobal.com](http://www.wilkinsrossglobal.com)



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## Social media sets the style & mood of beverage promotions



Looking for that perfect spring cocktail to welcome the sunny days and warmer nights? Try the Pina De Plata's recipe from Pernodricard ... 35ml Havana Club 3YO rum, 35ml Fresh pineapple juice, 25ml Sauvignon Blanc, 5ml lime juice, 10ml sugar syrup. Add all ingredients into a shaker with ice. Shake, chill, strain over ice, and garnish with mint sprig!



Absolut Elyx is a luxury vodka. Built on the principles of quality, integrity and craftsmanship and distilled in a manually operated vintage copper still from 1921.

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Dragon Energy ... getting ready for Fight Night.



Monster Energy drink at the Super Motocross.

Social media ... beverage promotion weird & wonderful



Star of Africa by Bevco ... one post states ... "Thats an Indian elephant!"



Heineken produced limited edition cans in the U.S., aptly named LOVE.LOVE! – inspired by the 0-0 tennis score, as a celebration of both moderation and tennis. Moderation continues to be a lasting rising trend, so Heineken is committed to offering choices in social settings.



Embrace the spirit of craftsmanship and savour the exquisite boldness of love with Mandala Tequila Anejo Love Edition. One sip of this blend and you will be captivated by its depth, kissed by its warmth. .



Celebrate life and Mexican tradition with Los Azulejos Skelly Añejo, housed in handcrafted clay bottles adorned with intricate Mexican artwork. This tequila from Urban Spirits, aged in French oak for over two years, blends rich heritage with exceptional quality, earning it a prestigious Double-Gold Medal.



Switch energy drink shows who they support at the DHL Stadium, Cape Town.



Celebrate Cap Classique Month with Darling Cellars. Indulge in sweet and savoury tastings, where the best in the business meets handcrafted treats and sliders.



A long weekend can only mean one thing at Lutzville vineyard ... "ons gaan nou braai!"



Leopards Leap has been a proud supporter and donor of the @capeleopardtrust for many years. Through Josh Frost, guide at Sanbona Wildlife Reserve, they recently were privileged to get front row seats to a blossoming romance. It is rare to see leopards of the Cape, let alone a mating pair. This is testament to the ongoing protection of this unique and wonderful area which is the key to unlocking the Little Karoo.



While you sip on your favourite Leopard's Leap wine or enjoy something delicious from the menu, bring them for a spin on the pump track! Just pack their bikes and helmets and they can entertain themselves. **SR**